

Washington, DC – Today, Representative Michael M. Honda (CA – 15) introduced a bipartisan resolution before the U.S. House of Representatives calling on the government of Japan to formally and unambiguously apologize for and acknowledge the tragedy that comfort women endured at the hands of its Imperial Army during World War II. More than 200,000 such women suffered gang rape, forced abortions, and other humiliations under Japan's colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II.

Upon introducing the legislation, Honda noted, "I would like to emphasize in the strongest terms that the purpose of this resolution is not to bash or humiliate Japan," he said. "This legislation, rather, seeks to achieve justice for the few remaining women who survived these atrocities, and to shed light on a grave human rights violation, that has remained unknown for so many years."

The resolution is cosponsored by: Representatives Edward R. Royce (CA – 40), Christopher H. Smith (NJ - 4), Diane E. Watson (CA - 33), David Wu (R - 1), Phil Hare (IL - 17), and Delegate Madaleine Bordallo (GU).

Rep. Honda's statement, entered into the Congressional Record upon introduction of the measure, and the full text of the resolution follow:

**Rep. Honda Statement for the Congressional Record
Regarding Comfort Women Resolution:**

January 31, 2007

“Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the over 200,000 ‘comfort women’ in Asia who suffered unimaginable dehumanization by the Japanese Imperial Army during Japan’s colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II.

“These women, whose experiences were unprecedented in cruelty and were officially commissioned by the Government of Japan, endured gang rape, forced abortions, humiliation, and sexual violence resulting in mutilation, death, or eventual suicide—and to this date, they have still not received justice from this tragedy.

“Their hope is a modest one: That the government of Japan acknowledges, apologizes and accepts full historical responsibility for this crime.

“Today, I am introducing a resolution which calls on Japan to formally and unambiguously apologize and acknowledge the tragedy which the comfort women endured under its

Imperial Army during World War II. Not only should Japan's Prime Minister issue a public apology, Japan must take responsibility unequivocally.

“Some question whether this resolution is necessary and warn that it could affect our nation's strong friendship and alliance with Japan. Some even argue that

Japan has already apologized, and this resolution fails to recognize that. It is true that Japan's previous Prime Ministers have issued statements related to comfort women. However, it is clear that these statements are not viewed by the government of Japan with unequivocal respect, and the comfort women themselves do not consider them formal apologies. Japan has equivocated in its stance on this issue, which is made clear in their recent attempts to alter previous public statements and their school

textbooks.

“For example, in 1993, Japan’s then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono issued an encouraging statement regarding Japan’s comfort women, which expressed the Government’s sincere apologies and remorse for their

ordeal. Today, some members of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party strive to review and even possibly rescind Secretary Kono's statement.

“Further, the Japanese government continues to

seek to downplay the comfort women system in its textbooks. We must ask ourselves, if Japan has truly come to terms with its past in acknowledging what its Imperial Army forced upon these women, why are they suppressing the knowledge of this through education? Education on this tragedy is important to ensure that future violence against women, especially in

conflicts, should not be tolerated or repeated. Textbook suppression, coupled with efforts to revise Secretary Kono's 1993 statement, is disheartening and indicates that Japan wavers in its apology to these women.

“I want to make it clear that I recognize and value the importance of our strong friendship with Japan. I appreciate Japan’s efforts to provide monetary compensation to surviving comfort women through the Asia Women’s Fund, a government initiated and largely government-funded private foundation whose purpose was the carrying

out of programs and projects with the aim of atonement for the comfort women. The Asia Women's Fund is to be disbanded on March 31, 2007, and while I agree that the Asia Women's Fund was important, the reality is that the majority of surviving comfort women refused to accept these funds, and that

without an unambiguous and unequivocal apology from the government of Japan, the money was not significant to them.

“The purpose of this

resolution is not to bash or humiliate Japan. This is about achieving justice for the few remaining women who survived this atrocity. We must recognize this grave human rights violation, which has remained unknown for so many years.

“Further, this resolution is intended to encourage and provide for reconciliation, as the U.S. Congress did when it passed H.R. 442, the Civil Liberties

Act of 1988, which was a formal apology made to U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry who were unjustly put into internment camps during World War II. As someone who was put into an internment camp at a young age, I know firsthand that we

must not be ignorant of the past, and that reconciliation through government actions is long lasting.

“I would be remiss if I failed to recognize the efforts that my good friend and former colleague Lane Evans made to push this issue forward in Congress. I am proud to be carrying the torch that Lane

passed on, and commend him for the hope he has instilled in the comfort women and the communities that have worked so hard on their behalf by bringing this issue to Congress.

“Madam Speaker, to put it frankly, the few surviving comfort women in the world who live with this burden are dying.

We must help them achieve some peace of mind by moving this resolution forward. For the women who survived this brutality, this resolution demonstrates that our nation supports

them and hears their
voices calling for
justice.”

Text of Honda Comfort Women

Resolution:

110TH CONGRESS

Expressing the
sense of the House
of Representatives
that

the Government of
Japan should
formally
acknowledge,

apologize, and
accept historical
responsibility in a

clear

and unequivocal
manner for its
Imperial Armed
Force's

coercion of young
women into sexual
slavery, known to

the world as
“comfort women”,
during its colonial
and

wartime occupation
of Asia and the
Pacific Islands from

the 1930s through
the duration of World
War II.

Whereas the
Government of
Japan, during its
colonial and

wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from

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the 1930s through
the duration of World
War II, officially

commissioned the
acquisition of young
women for

the sole purpose of
sexual servitude to
its Imperial

Armed Forces, who
became known to
the world as *ianfu*

or “comfort women”;

Whereas the
“comfort women”
system of forced
military

prostitution by the
Government of
Japan, considered
unprecedented

in its cruelty and
magnitude, included
gang

rape, forced
abortions,
humiliation, and
sexual violence

resulting in
mutilation, death, or
eventual suicide in

one

of the largest cases
of human trafficking
in the 20th century;

Whereas some new
textbooks used in
Japanese schools
seek

to downplay the
“comfort women”
tragedy and other

Japanese war
crimes during World
War II;

Whereas Japanese
public and private
officials have
recently

expressed a desire
to dilute or rescind
the 1993 statement

by Chief Cabinet
Secretary Yohei
Kono on the

“comfort women”,
which expressed the
Government’s
sincere

apologies and
remorse for their
ordeal;

Whereas the
Government of
Japan did sign the
1921 International

Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in

Women and Children
and supported the
2000 United Nations

Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women,

Peace, and Security
which recognized the
unique impact

of armed conflict on
women;

Whereas the House

of Representatives
commends Japan's
efforts

to promote human
security, human
rights, democratic

values, and rule of
law, as well as for
being a supporter

of Security Council
Resolution 1325;

Whereas the House
of Representatives
commends those
Japanese

officials and private
citizens whose hard
work and

compassion resulted
in the establishment
in 1995 of Japan's

private Asian
Women's Fund;

Whereas the Asian

Women's Fund has
raised \$5,700,000 to

extend "atonement"
from the Japanese
people to the

comfort women; and

Whereas the
mandate of the

Asian Women's Fund, a government

initiated and largely
government-funded
private

foundation whose
purpose was the
carrying out of
programs

and projects with the
aim of atonement for
the

maltreatment and
suffering of the
“comfort women”,

comes to an end on
March 31, 2007, and
the Fund is

to be disbanded as
of that date: Now,
therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is
the sense of the
House of Rep-

resentatives that the
Government of
Japan—

(1) should formally
acknowledge,
apologize, and

accept historical
responsibility in a
clear and
unequivocal manner

for its Imperial
Armed Force's
coercion of young
women into sexual
slavery, known to the
world as "comfort
women", during its
colonial

and wartime
occupation of Asia
and the Pacific
Islands from the
1930s through the
duration of World
War II;

(2) should have this
official apology given
as a

public statement
presented by the
Prime Minister of

Japan in his official
capacity;

 (3) should
clearly and publicly
refute any claims

that the sexual
enslavement and
trafficking of the

“comfort women” for
the Japanese
Imperial Armed

Forces never
occurred; and

(4) should educate

current and future
generations about
this horrible crime
while following the
recommendations of
the international
community 7

with respect to the
“comfort women”.

